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Paper Proposal/Abstract

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Study Group: Religious freedom, persecution and mission

Title: The Persecuted: Missional Focus in Adverse Circumstances

Abstract:

Throughout recorded history believers have been unjustly imprisoned and unmercifully persecuted. Usually their only “punishable” activity has been to give their allegiance to the Living God priority over allegiance to other gods or earthly powers. Examples abound in Scripture where God’s people have been imprisoned or persecuted simply because they chose to obey God rather than bow to earthly systems (e.g. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 1-3; Daniel himself in Daniel 6, Peter and John in Acts 4 and Paul in Acts 21-28).

In today’s world believers face similar critical decisions when the powers in their context require them to give allegiance to cultural or religious systems that violate their allegiance to the One True God. Those who refuse can be persecuted, imprisoned, ostracized and even worse. Given one’s God-ordained missional assignment, how does that one respond when they are the object of such persecution? This paper will consider the thinking and prayer requests of those imprisoned and persecuted in the four examples mentioned from Scripture and draw lessons for present-day believers in adverse circumstances.